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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS

- TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Tuesday morning papers front-paged the decision made Monday by the Tokyo High Court to reject an appeal from Aum Shinrikyo founder Shoko Asahara that he is too mentally ill to stand trial and take responsibility for the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin attack. The papers suggested that the court decision would make the finalization of his death sentence likely.

¶1. "With No Anti-Japanese Demonstrations This Year, China Looking to Improve Ties with Post-Koizumi Japan" The conservative Sankei's Beijing correspondent Ito wrote (3/28): "It has been nearly one year since anti-Japanese demonstrations were held all across China. Although Japan-China relations have actually worsened since then, there are no signs of an anti-Japanese movement recurring. While this is in part due to the authorities in Beijing clamping down, it goes beyond the fear of public disorder on their part and reflects hopes for improved bilateral relations.... Japan-China relations have deteriorated since last spring because of PM Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, natural gas development in the East China Sea, and issues relating to Taiwan and security.

¶2. "Nevertheless, there is zero chance of a recurrence this year of what the Chinese government at the time defended as 'spontaneous demonstrations of citizens dissatisfied with the Japanese authorities.' Last year's demonstrations could never have occurred without government approval. Beijing has started laying the groundwork for repairing relations with 'post-Koizumi' Japan. In a recent press conference, Premier Wen Jiabao made three proposals for improving ties. Around that same time, China also invited Japanese cabinet ministers and influential ruling party members to Beijing, and Chinese

President Hu Jintao plans to meet with leaders from several Japan-China friendship organizations at the end of this month. A diplomatic source in Beijing said that the recent Chinese moves are connected with Hu's visit to the US planned for next month, saying that China is playing up its efforts to improve relations with Japan in the hope that Washington will press Tokyo to resolve the standoff over Yasukuni Shrine."

SCHIEFFER